

BENEFITS OF NATURE FOR MENTAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Human interaction with the natural environment has a significant impact on mental health. Spending time in nature has been shown to be effective in reducing stress and anxiety, and improving psychological well-being. Nature provides important relaxing effects to the body and facilitates better emotion regulation processes. Direct experience with natural environments can increase mindfulness, which contributes to more effective management of emotions. In addition, connection with nature can stimulate the senses through the stimulation of sounds, smells and green sights that serve to calm the mind, improve mood and create a can provide benefits for mental health such as supporting human physiological aspects, as well as its role in achieving better emotional balance, integrating time in nature into daily routines can be an effective strategy to improve mental health.

Keywords: Emotional Regulation, Mindfulness, Human Physiology, Relaxation, Stimulation

ABSTRAK

Interaksi manusia dengan lingkungan alam mempunyai dampak yang signifikan terhadap kesehatan mental. Menghabiskan waktu di alam terbukti efektif dalam mengurangi stres dan kecemasan, serta meningkatkan kesejahteraan psikologis. Alam memberikan efek relaksasi yang penting pada tubuh dan memfasilitasi proses pengaturan emosi yang lebih baik. Pengalaman langsung dengan lingkungan alam dapat meningkatkan kewaspadaan, sehingga berkontribusi pada pengelolaan emosi yang lebih efektif. Selain itu, keterhubungan dengan alam dapat merangsang indera melalui rangsangan suara, bau dan pemandangan hijau yang berfungsi untuk menenangkan pikiran, meningkatkan mood dan menciptakan suasana hati yang dapat memberikan manfaat bagi kesehatan mental seperti mendukung aspek fisiologis manusia, serta perannya dalam mencapai keseimbangan emosional yang lebih baik, mengintegrasikan waktu di alam ke dalam rutinitas sehari-hari dapat menjadi strategi yang efektif untuk meningkatkan kesehatan mental.

Kata Kunci: Regulasi emosi, mindfulness, fisiologi manusia, relaksasi, stimulasi

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is an important aspect for the sustainability of human life. Without realising it, physical health also has a close relationship with mental health. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), mental health is defined as a state in which individuals are able to manage daily stress, work productively, and contribute to their surroundings. There are several factors that influence mental health, including somatogenetic, psychogenic and sociogenic. Apart from exposure to nature, physical activities also play an important role in influencing health, both physical and mental. Nature has a significant impact on mental health, such as reducing stress, improving concentration, and providing a relaxing effect. Without realising it, our daily activities are often related to nature, one of which is through the application of the biophilic concept. Biophilic is a design approach that integrates natural elements into the built environment. While there are many studies that discuss the effects of nature on human health, it is rare to examine specific components or elements

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within nature and their impact on mental health. This article aims to take an in-depth look at the benefits of nature on mental health, focusing on how elements of nature can contribute to psychological well-being. In addition, the article is organised in an easy-to-understand language so that readers can better understand the meaning conveyed. By filling the existing research gap, it is hoped that this article can provide new insights into the importance of interactions with nature in supporting mental health.

METHODS

This research uses a literature review method by means of a descriptive qualitative approach. Descriptive qualitative is data collection that focuses on words and not on numbers, the data collected is then analysed to make it easier for readers to understand. Literature review itself is an important part of research that aims to collect, analyse about a particular topic. The literature review search in this study uses google scholar, publish or perish, scispace. Which of course is very commonly used as a search for reference sources that can be trusted. The data analysis technique used to find out about the benefits of nature and its impact on mental health is a qualitative data analysis technique which is a process of organising, and understanding the data obtained in depth.

RESULTS

Mental health is important for the sustainability of human life, without us realising that physical health is also closely related to mental health. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), mental health is a state where individuals can manage daily stress, work productively and contribute to their environment. Mental health has long been a focus of study in the World Health Organisation (WHO). Mental health can also be interpreted where humans are free from all forms of problems or other mental disorders, when individuals are faced with problems and experience stress, these individuals can manage stress well (Suci at al.,2024). Mental health must be maintained and treated as much as possible, because if mental health is disturbed, activities will also be disrupted such as fatigue, stress and withdrawal from the surrounding environment. A person can be said to be mentally healthy if the person does not experience symptoms of mental disorders or mental illness (Fetty at al.,2022). However, mental health is often disturbed, mental disorders are conditions where individuals experience psychiatric symptoms, this can be caused by several factors, including somatogenetic, psychogenic, and sociogenic. Somatogenic factors include neurochemistry, maturity level and organic development. Psychogenic factors include abnormal mother-child interactions such as lack of trust, lack of paternal role, and family relationships. Sociogenic factors include parenting, stability in the family and health and education facilities (Adisty at al.,2015). However, there are also those who state that there are other factors such as biological factors, which until now have not found genes that cause mental disorders but have found variations of multiple genes that have contributed to affected brain function. Environmental factors such as trauma, problems and severe stress can cause mental health disorders, living in a place that affects mental health, besides that there are also lifestyle factors such as lack of sleep, poor diet and lack of exercise (Fetty at al.,2022). Some of these factors can be seen that the cause of mental disorders is not only from one factor, it is because humans are complex and intact creatures and consist of a single unit, therefore it is very likely that the cause of mental disorders is caused by a combination of various existing factors. Mental health is also not only felt by the individual himself but also by the people around us. The existence of an individual will affect and be affected by the surrounding environment (Adisty at al.,2015).

Without us realising it, nature plays a very important role in the survival of human life, nature is a source of energy such as sun, water and air. Rapid population growth has led to a rapid decline in direct exposure to nature. Open spaces such as city parks, hiking trails and so on have significant ecological, social and psychological benefits (Titiani at al.,2024). However, after the development of technology and progress, humans rarely

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interact with nature, this can be seen from humans who increasingly damage nature such as littering, cutting trees, polluting the environment and so on. Whereas if we look at nature, it also has benefits for human psychology and helps in improving mental health. Nature is also part of a form of healing or alternative therapy to heal mental health, its atmosphere and nature can reduce stress, increase focus and increase the value that exists in humans (Suci at al.,2024). In the theory of attention recovery states that interaction with nature can increase focus and in other explanations also state that natural scenery can reduce stress and can improve mood (Titiani at al.,2024). In addition to the nature exposure mentioned above, physical activity can also affect mental health. In general, studies in various countries state that adequate physical activity can benefit mental health and reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke and other chronic diseases. There is a book that states that the benefits of physical activity are twofold: physical biological benefits and psychological benefits. Physical benefits include maintaining blood pressure, maintaining endurance and keeping fit. In addition, psychological benefits such as reducing stress, increasing self-confidence and increasing concentration (Udin at al.,2019). By returning to a healthy, calm and sedentary life, one way to achieve this is by exercising. Through exercise we can reclassify the body, improve blood pressure, remove toxins from the body and can reduce stress (Arif at al.,2020). Emotion regulation is our ability to regulate or manage emotions. Emotion regulation refers to a series of processes that individuals go through. Of course, each individual has their own way. Poor emotion regulation can refer to stress to eating disorders, of course this will affect the individual's mental health (Intan at al.,2021). Emotion regulation can also be interpreted as a person's emotional formation, emotions that are owned and how to manage emotions. A person with good emotional regulation can behave well and benefit himself and others such as being able to work together, help others and so on. Meanwhile, if someone has poor emotion regulation, it can result in a negative impact from low regulation abilities such as a lack of understanding the emotions felt, causing difficulty in modifying emotions in solving problems (Putri at al.,2017).

The link between nature and mental health is significant, as interaction with the natural environment can act as an important factor in stress reduction, mood enhancement, relaxation and psychological stimulation. Research shows that being in nature can relieve mental and emotional tension. Winda Sri Rukmana, in her research, states that 'interaction with the natural environment can help reduce levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, and increase positive mood' (Rukmana, 2024). This suggests that the presence of nature provides a much-needed restorative effect for individuals living in busy and stressful urban environments. Physical activities performed outdoors, such as walking, hiking, or cycling, have been shown to provide significant psychological benefits. Research by Irbah and Kusumowidagdo emphasises that 'activities in natural environments have been shown to have a positive impact on mental health, including increasing concentration and improving mood' (Irbah & Kusumowidagdo, 2020). These activities not only stimulate relaxation, but also increase mental productivity. By spending time in nature, individuals can feel positively stimulated which contributes to overall psychological well-being. In addition, experiences in nature often connect individuals with natural elements that can enhance a sense of connectedness and balance in their lives. The relaxing effects offered by natural environments are also often associated with increased creativity and better thinking skills. Rukmana adds that 'nature has the ability to stimulate more profound and creative cognitive processes, which are often inhibited in dense urban environments' (Rukmana, 2024). Therefore, it is important to ensure that people have better access to green open spaces and natural environments. This will not only support individual mental health but also contribute to overall community health. Encouraging interaction with nature through better public policies and urban planning can be an effective measure in improving people's psychological well-being, especially in this era of rapid urbanisation. According to Irbah and Kusumowidagdo, 'the importance of integrating the natural environment in urban planning and regional development to improve people's mental health' is crucial (Irbah & Kusumowidagdo, 2020).

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Biophilia is a concept introduced by Edward O. Wilson, describing the human tendency to seek connections with nature and living things around them. The concept argues that interaction with nature provides significant psychological benefits, including stress reduction and improved mental well-being. Research shows that exposure to natural elements, such as plants, water and natural light, can stimulate positive feelings and reduce anxiety levels (Suwanto, 2015). Meanwhile, mindfulness is a mindfulness practice that involves deliberate attention to present experience without judgement. Mindfulness has been shown to be effective in reducing anxiety symptoms, improving emotion regulation, and enhancing overall quality of life (Creswell, 2017). When mindfulness is practised in nature, such as in a forest, the benefits of biophilia can be felt even more. In a natural environment, individuals can connect with elements of biophilia through various senses, seeing the sights of nature, hearing the sounds of nature, and feeling the fresh air which can deepen the experience of mindfulness (Gufron & Risnawati, 2012). This creates a space for individuals to soak in current experiences and release accumulated stress. The combination of biophilia and mindfulness can produce a strong synergistic effect on mental health. As stated by Creswell, 'Mindfulness interventions not only promote mental health but can be further enhanced through natural environments that foster a sense of connection and tranquility' (Creswell, 2017). In this context, harmonious interactions with nature not only reinforce mindfulness practices, but also help individuals feel more connected and calm, thus overall improving their psychological well-being (Suyono et al., 2016).

CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that mental health is a very important aspect for the survival of individuals and society. Good mental health enables individuals to manage stress effectively, function productively, and contribute positively to their social environment. Mental health disorders can be caused by a complex range of factors, including somatogenic, psychogenic, and sociogenic, as well as environmental influences and unhealthy lifestyles, such as poor sleep and poor diet.

Interaction with nature has been shown to have a significant positive impact on mental health, with studies showing that exposure to natural elements can help reduce stress, improve mood and promote relaxation. The concept of biophilia emphasises that the human tendency to connect with nature is an integral part of psychological well-being. Meanwhile, the practice of mindfulness, which involves paying full attention to present experiences, can be amplified when done in natural environments. When individuals practice mindfulness outdoors, they can feel the presence of biophilia elements through their senses, such as seeing natural sights, hearing natural sounds, and feeling fresh air.

The combination of biophilia and mindfulness creates a strong synergistic effect on mental health, which not only strengthens the practice of mindfulness but also enhances individuals' sense of connectedness and calmness. As urbanisation increases and interactions with nature decrease, it is important for individuals and communities to maintain a healthy relationship with their natural environment. Better access to green spaces and public policies that support interaction with nature are crucial steps in improving people's overall mental health. Therefore, awareness of the importance of nature as a source of healing and mental well-being should continue to be promoted, so that individuals can achieve a better life balance and optimal mental health.

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